

JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER  
3RD DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION  
AND RELATED AGENCIES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND  
WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES  
U.S. JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1602

□ 2352 RAYBURN HOB  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-3536

□ GENERAL O.O. HOWARD HOUSE  
750 ANDERSON STREET, SUITE B  
VANCOUVER, WA 98661  
(360) 695-6292

WWW.JHB.HOUSE.GOV

May 19, 2021

Governor Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

I am writing on behalf of many of our shared constituents who are deeply troubled over the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) decision to locate a COVID-isolation facility and Department of Corrections holding center in a motel in a busy commercial area in Centralia. What is also troubling is that DOH gave the local community virtually no notice and provided no opportunity to comment before opening the facility.

I have supported and the federal government has supplied hundreds of millions of dollars to the state of Washington to respond to COVID in a manner that minimizes disruption and risk to residents who have already absorbed immense trauma in the past 16 months. This controversial decision and the haphazard way the state has gone about it has failed on these accounts; it has alarmed the community in and around Centralia, including those small businesses that have spent the last 16 months surviving the devastation of COVID and state-mandated closures and restrictions.

I have met with a number of these local residents and business owners who were shocked to first learn in the local newspaper about the state's decision to open this facility on a Wednesday, and then find out that it was up and running 48 hours later. Local officials have described receiving an outcry of opposition from Centralia residents based on concerns over safety, health and economic impacts. Many have raised questions that deserve immediate responses from DOH and your administration.

1. Why wasn't the community given appropriate notice before this decision was made? Furthermore, why was there no opportunity for local residents to weigh in on this decision before it was finalized?
2. A year ago, the state was preparing to site a COVID isolation facility at Maple Lane, a largely empty state-owned facility. Why was that plan abandoned? Why wasn't that decision making process communicated to the public? Many have observed that there was public notice and superior transparency provided by the state during the much more emergent period of March, 2020 about the Maple Lane site than the recent Lakeview Inn location. Why?

3. What criteria did this location meet that was not met by any other motel farther north, which may have been located near a less populated area? There appears to have been a lack of regard for public welfare when a decision was made to locate COVID-19 positive patients at a motel in a commercial area right in the I-5 corridor.
4. Were potential impacts on the local economy considered when choosing to take over an entire motel and locate this facility next to coffee shops and restaurants? This city is a hub for sports tournaments, which is a significant boon to local hospitality businesses and other retailers that have been hit so hard by state COVID restrictions.
5. What specific authority grants the Department of Health the ability to locate a Department of Corrections facility in an area without the consent of the local governments and population? Several constituents are uncertain of this and even if the authority does exist, why would the state exercise this authority in such a manner that completely disregards collaboration with local governments and the principle of local control?

On behalf of the Centralia community, please provide satisfactory answers to these questions as soon as possible. When the state fails to provide transparency and the opportunity for a community I represent to weigh in before taking action like this, I'm left with little choice but to stand up for them, demand accountability and urge the state to respond appropriately to all of their concerns.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress